

Practical Points.

The Dietary of Typhoid Patients.

Dr. William Ewart, F.R.C.P., in a lecture on the Principles of Treatment of Typhoid Fever, delivered at St. George's Hospital, London, to which he is Senior Physician, lays great emphasis on "empty bowel alimentation," and lays down two great principles which, seemingly incompatible, are really easy to combine—viz., "plenty of food" and "no fæces." The recognised vital requirement that there shall be within the bowel a sufficient bulk of solid insoluble material, is to be met, not by food, but by charcoal, of which the use is advocated, so the whole question narrows itself down to a skilled selection from the group of foods which leave "no residue." We quote the following from Dr. Ewart's paper, which appears in the *British Medical Journal* :—

"Typhoid patients can ill afford to spare from their dietary two essential groups apt to be forgotten under the régime of pure milk in which these are not sufficiently represented:—(1) the mineral salts and (2) the organic acids and essences contained in fruits and vegetables.

"Common salt is not, as in nephritis, a complication—the typhoid kidney not being impervious—but a help to digestion and to metabolism. It should be given in the whey in the proportion of 10 to 15 gr. to the half-pint in addition to sugar. The phosphates are not less important, and a more abundant supply than is contained in the milk can only do good. This additional amount may be conveniently given in syrup as a medical food. But we possess in vegetable diet a natural source for their derivation and for that of other mineral and organic salts.

"Neither vegetables nor fruit should be administered in bulk, although, as I realised many years ago, clarified vegetable soups are indicated in typhoid fever, as they also are in rheumatic fever. . . . The objection (of bulk), which applies to all fruit and vegetables, cannot be made against their watery extracts duly strained, especially when freed by boiling from any excess of coagulable albumen. The juice of various fruits may be relished in this way, and a standing item is the daily cup or two of vegetable soup or broth lightly flavoured with fresh beef or bacon and scrupulously clarified.

"Most acceptable, too, is a frequent rotation of fruit jellies, among which apple jelly is probably the most salutary. The pectose which these jellies contain is probably absorbable without precipitation.

"As to the comparative bacteriological merits of the 'meat' and of the 'vegetable bouillons' I must leave it to experts to decide which of the two is the more favourable menstruum for pathological cultures in the intestine. From a merely clinical standpoint I regard an attack of typhoid fever as a fine opportunity for the blessings of a vegetarian course, particularly for the purin-encumbered patients past middle age, who are so often rejuvenated by their long illness, and I prefer to derive most of the needful nitrogenous income from other sources than meat.

"The nitrogenous supply is represented by peptonised whey, and, if thought desirable, by genuine artificial peptones, but more simply by white of egg diffused in the whey before peptonising. Eggs are (in the absence of any adverse idiosyncrasy) a most valuable part of the dietary. The egg may be regarded as 'chicken milk' at the same time as the 'fetal pabulum' of the chick. Its albumen is most diffusible, and when dissolved in the whey in small and progressive quantities, and peptonised, it is probably absorbed in the upper part of the intestine. As to the diffusibility of the yolk, enough that we should remember that it fulfils the same office as the maternal plasma in the placental mode of fetal nutrition, in feeding the tissues by direct penetration. A yolk a day in divided portions may be added to the dietary at a fairly early date without fear of unabsorbed sedimentation. Egg is thus a complement to the whey, making up for some of its deficiencies in albumen and in fat, and something more, inasmuch as it is in itself a complete storehouse of all the constituents of the animal body.

"The carbohydrate supply is most easily managed, sugars and dextrines being all absorbable without residue. In addition to saccharose and lactose, which are fermentable, but nevertheless usually well tolerated, we have the animal glucose in a non-fermentable form as clarified honey, a favourite member of the typhoid dietary. Sugar and glucosides are also abundantly present in the fruit jellies. Maltine, too, is an additional resource. Not one of the members of this large contingent is capable of furnishing a residue so long as there is enough water to keep it in solution in the alimentary tract.

"Among the fats the least likely to yield any residue is oil itself. But cream is more acceptable. It may be taken alone or added to the whey. One ounce a day is a sufficient amount, to be worked up to progressively from smaller doses.

"Although it is not mathematically accurate to say that no organised remnant and no chemical precipitate can be left in the jejunum by the foods enumerated, this is substantially true. It is for the physician to suit the proportion of each of the latter to the stage under treatment, bearing in mind that it is a mistake to attempt much feeding during the first few days. Even whey may yield more coagulum than can be digested. Two pints and a half of salted whey may be quite sufficient, in addition to plenty of water, pure or flavoured. The whey should not be fortified in the manner described until the turgid abdomen has subsided and the mucous membrane has recovered from its early typhoid disablement. Sugar, albumen, and cream may then be supplied, singly at first, but afterwards jointly, with due regard to the indications afforded by a daily inspection of the stools. As soon as it is quite clear that the fortified whey, which is the basis of the diet, is suiting the digestion, the soup and the spoon-food delicacies—such as honey, fruit, jelly, and the rest—may be added to the dietary one by one; and in a short while the arrears of nutrition will begin to be made good; but the growing total of food supplies will make it the more essential to provide for a daily evacuation."

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